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## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

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### Lithuania: Is A Settlement in Sight?

- Recent signs of compromise have improved prospects for getting negotiations started, but remaining obstacles make the odds of ending the confrontation over the next couple of weeks no better than even.
- Gorbachev's insistence that Lithuania pursue independence following Moscow's secession procedures remains non-negotiable; Landsbergis, while more inclined to compromise, is still not willing to accept Moscow's secession law.
- Efforts by Latvia and Estonia to achieve independence by a less confrontational course could provide Lithuania with a way to retreat from its present position, but Moscow will have to be more flexible if it is to avoid a Baltic-wide confrontation.
- Even as the two sides seek a way out of the impasse, the potential for civil disobedience and possibly violence will grow in Lithuania as the economic noose tightens, greatly raising the domestic and foreign costs to Gorbachev.

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*This Executive Brief reflects the views of Intelligence Community representatives expressed at a meeting on 27 April 1990. It was drafted by the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and coordinated with representatives in CIA, State/INR, DLA, NSA.*

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Recent hints of possible concessions by both Lithuania and Moscow have fueled speculation about a possible resolution of the crisis.

- The Lithuanians have said from the beginning that all is negotiable except independence.
- Various Lithuanian leaders indicated over the weekend that they could suspend implementation of laws passed since their declaration of independence as requested by Kohl and Mitterrand and, thus, satisfy one of Moscow's key demands.
- Gorbachev's press spokesman has also noted that Moscow would accept a suspension of the laws and the declaration as meeting the requirements for negotiations.
- Some Lithuanians are reporting that Moscow has said supplies of natural gas will be increased so that a major chemical plant in Lithuania could remain open; while so far unconfirmed by Moscow, such a step could be interpreted as an attempt to find a compromise solution, even though Moscow might be doing it for largely self-serving reasons.

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#### Moscow's Approach

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Even so, Gorbachev remains determined to force Lithuania and all other republics to accept the same difficult, but not necessarily impossible, procedures for leaving the USSR.

- In our view, the requirement for holding a referendum on secession, negotiating the terms of separation, and gaining Congress of People's Deputies approval of the "divorce settlement" is non-negotiable.
- Moscow apparently is still insisting that the declaration of independence

be at least suspended and that Lithuania comply with Soviet law.

- While Gorbachev is undoubtedly being encouraged to adopt this stance by orthodox military and political forces, he clearly sees this as a test of his leadership and believes he must hang tough to prevent other republics from doing the same thing.

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#### Pressures on Lithuania Building

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Gorbachev also probably believes that the pressures on Lithuania to accept his conditions are growing and can be intensified if he plays his cards effectively.

- The economic squeeze is getting tighter; coal shipments have now been stopped as well. While food will not be a major problem, much of the republic's industrial capacity will have to shut down in a couple of weeks, even if there is some increase in gas supplies.
- Splits within the Lithuanian government over tactics for pursuing independence have been evident from the beginning. Moscow is encouraging them and is trying to undermine Landsbergis' leadership and promote the idea that Brazauskas, the leader of the pro-independence Lithuanian Communists, would be more competent.
- Western reaction, as viewed in Moscow, has given Lithuania only rhetorical support and indicated that few countries are willing to put their interests in dealing with Moscow at risk for Lithuania.
- While Moscow still retains the option of using the military forces now in Lithuania to impose presidential rule, pressure to do so has eased as political and economic measures have become more effective.

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**Serious Problems Remain**

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Important differences still separate the two sides, however. Not all developments are moving in Moscow's favor.

- Lithuanians still seem determined to resist backing down on their declaration of independence, a key Moscow demand.
- Latvia and Estonia are moving toward independence albeit in a less confrontational way. Even so, this is increasing pressure on Moscow to make some compromises to keep the dialogue going and avoid a Baltic-wide confrontation.
- As the economic pain in Lithuania intensifies and a sense of desperation grows with no settlement in sight, the potential for civil disobedience and even violence will increase. Such a development would significantly raise both the international and domestic costs to Gorbachev, further complicating his efforts to develop an economic reform package.

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**Outlook**

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Prospects for political resolution of the confrontation have improved, but are still no better than even in the next couple of weeks.

- Many uncertainties remain: most importantly, the pressures within Lithuania to accept a retreat on principle as the economic noose gets tighter.
- Even though Landsbergis is sounding more inclined to compromise, he is still not prepared to retreat on principle and accept Moscow's constitution and laws as the only basis for leaving the USSR.
- Given the stakes involved (establishing procedures for secession that are applicable for all), it is doubtful that Gorbachev will go along with anything less than Lithuanian acceptance of Moscow's rules.
- Short of revoking its declaration, Lithuania's prospects for achieving complete independence would probably be improved significantly if it made additional concessions to reach a compromise with Moscow.